

## **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN MANAGEMENT OF TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN KOH YAO YAI, PHANG-NGA PROVINCE, THAILAND**

**PAKIN WITCHAYAKAWIN**

*Research Scholar, International College, Naresuan University, Thailand*

### **ABSTRACT**

*This research aims to investigate the physical and characteristics of tourist attractions in Koh Yao Yai, to study the community participation in management of tourist attractions and to suggest the ways to participate to develop Koh Yao Yai to be sustainable site. This qualitative research builds a sample by extremely cases and maximum variation sampling. The target group includes Koh Yao Yai leaders 15 subjects and villagers 40 subjects. The data were collected during July 2016 by observation, in-depth interview and focus group discussion. The data analyzing process involved preparing, segmenting, coding, categorizing and themetizing. The results presented the nature in Koh Yao Yai is plentifully that includes forests and beaches where is the main tourist attraction. The community participation in management of tourist attractions in Koh Yao Yai includes 1) households self-manage garbage by burning and sanitary landfill closing 2) community cooperates with municipality's garbage truck to separate and manage garbage in bin or bag as well as to co-operate cleaning beaches 3) villagers participate to preserve nature by tree planting along road and mangrove forest, zoning seagrass, and conserving heredity of sea animals and sea plant 4) community keeps well ways of life, believe and career to show the visitors, and 5) villagers participate to clean the island on big cleaning day each month. Koh Yao Yai should set up a conservation center and manage the wastewater, garbage separation system and add more glossary shops and homestays. The communities should more involve Koh Yao Yai by participation in decision-making and tourist attractions planning.*

**KEYWORDS:** Community Participation, Management, Tourist Attraction, Koh Yao Yai & Thailand

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### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background/Objectives and Goals**

#### **Koh Yao District in Phang-Nga Province, Thailand**

Koh Yao is a precious island in the Andaman Sea with abundant natural resources and a community with a unique way of life. The community decided in 1995 to turn the island into a tourist destination to create income while preserving the local culture and practices. Their dedication to nature and the resort has received wide support of many visitors (McNeil, 2016). Koh Yao District is divided to two islands – Koh Yao Yai (two sub-districts) and Koh Yao Noi (one sub-district – Koh Yao Noi). Koh Yao Yai includes two sub-districts – Koh Yao Yai sub-district (four villages) and Prunai sub-district (seven villages). The primary population is Thai and believes in Islam. The main careers of population are fishery and agriculture. The core tourist attraction in Koh Yao Yai is beach.

Koh Yao Noi Homestay has won the best homestay award of the ASEAN Homestay Awards of 2016-18, being one of Thailand's five homestay destinations competing for the title. Koh Yao Noi Homestay, there they

witnessed a peaceful, clean and simple complex with over 20 rooms as well as bungalows for visitors who want extra privacy (McNeil, 2016).

Being the world's fourteen most beautiful unspoiled island by Yahoo Travel Magazine 2015 (Yahoo Travel Magazine 2015, 2015) - Koh Yao shows itself as an outstanding tourism spot in Thailand amongst the demand of tourism in the South East Asia. Koh Yao Yai is the primary island of Koh Yao islands group where keeps well its natural virgin as the importance of tourist attractions. Thailand and ASEAN countries are still emphasis to get revenue from guest side (tourists) while do not make balance to take care of tourism resources in their owner countries. Community participation in management of tourist attraction is a core to maintain Koh Yao Yai and to conserve it for long-term.

The study of Nakthewan, Yangtale and Witchayakawin (2013) expressed the sustainable tourism of Koh Yao Noi where is an island close to Koh Yao Yai, the finding showed that Koh Yao Noi got sustainability by many factors as cooperation between communities' leaders, local people and visitors. Thus, this study focuses on Koh Yao Yai that can support both islands to get sustainability through tourism activities. This study may launch ASEAN countries to rethink more about resources side development and find the way to protect tourism impacts before to develop the guest side. The tourism resources and physical environment in Koh Yao Noi are high abundances; the communities' leader should have more methods to distribute the economy to local people as wife house community settlement and local products for tourism market establishment. The Koh Yao Noi community should provide information about local regulation to living among local people and community, and traveling manual for visitors (Nakthewan, Yangtale & Witchayakawin 2013).

### **Role and Power of Local Communities**

Theoretically, the role of local communities in tourism development in the context of policy and decision-making depends on the type and level of participatory approach within a tourist destination. According to Mannigel (2008), there are different levels of participation ranging from simple sharing of information to a full transfer of power and responsibilities. The power of the local communities to influence decision making, as well as policy making, depend on the level of participatory approach being in operation in a particular destination. For example, in most developing countries, the decision and policy making process is typically top-down and is dominated by the government, private sector and NGOs (Scherl & Edwards, 2007).

Local community members have a wide range of motivations for entering into social exchanges with visitors, ranging from solely economic, to a genuine desire to provide quality experiences. Additionally, the nature of island cultural interaction could vary immensely, from welcoming and meaningful exchanges through to superficial and even hostile contact Moyle, Croy & Weiler, 2010).

According to the study of Lekaota (2015), the management of tourism should closely involve the government, the private sector and the host community at destination being developed. The communities should be included in the management of the development of rural tourism Involvement in management promoted interest and participation amongst communities because they felt that they were part of tourism development. In the Lesotho Northern Parks, not all stakeholders were involved in its management and planning. This created a problem because it led to a misunderstanding for how the parks should be operated. Involving communities in the management would reduce the present negative attitude of tourism and help communities to understand that rural tourism development cannot employ each and every one in the villages, although some roles can be shared or rotated amongst a few. Communities should be involved in the

management of tourist destinations to ensure that all issues concerning communities are taken into account during the development of tourism. The public involvement in tourism was an essential element of the management of tourism, including its planning and design. The engagement of all stakeholders is crucial to ensuring the sustainability of development of tourism in rural areas. Tourism developers have an obligation to let the local communities know about their plans and enable them to become involved, because this ultimately is in their interest. The local communities should be involved in both the decision-making and the operation of the nature reserves.

The power of local communities to influence decision making and demand their legitimate stake is questionable. Arguably, their participation can hardly go beyond mere consultation and information exchange (Scherl & Edwards, 2007). However, there are some positive examples of partnership between local communities and other key stakeholders. For example, in a study conducted in Costa Rica, Matarrita - Cascante et al. (2010) noted that participation was reflected in different levels ranging from local involvement in community meetings (involvement) to ownership and management of local resources. Such varied participation provided local communities with the capacity to influence change in their region. Perhaps, this difference can be attributed to the heterogeneity of communities and the variations in the adoption of different participatory approaches (Muganda, Sirima & Ezra, 2013).

Cater (1994) highlights the need for local community involvement in planning and managing tourism, particularly in the context of developing countries. Drake (1991) has stated that participation is increasingly being regarded as fundamental to the effectiveness of the planning and management of tourism. In fact, community participation in tourism development does not only relate to the decision-making process and the benefits of tourism development but also regarded integral to sustainable tourism (D'Amore, 1992; Green, 1995; Leslie, 1993; Murphy, 1988).

A community participation approach has long been advocated as an integral part of sustainable tourism development. It is envisaged that the approach can increase a community's carrying capacity by reducing tourism's negative impacts while enhancing its positive effects (Haywood, 1988; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Murphy, 1985). According to Connell (1997: 250), participation is 'not only about achieving the more efficient and more equitable distribution of material resources: it is also about the sharing of knowledge and the transformation of the process of learning itself in the service of people's self-development'. Arnstein (1969) states that the purpose of participation is power redistribution, thereby enabling society to redistribute benefits and costs. In the context of tourism planning, Haywood (1988: 106) defines community participation as 'a process of involving all stakeholders (local government officials, local citizens, architects, developers, business people, and planners) in such way that decision-making is shared'.

### **Communities' Participation for Sustainability**

Regarding study of Sanchez-Canizares and Castillo-Canalejo (2014), presented the supply and demand side that also represented the primary of communities' participation and sustainability. On the supply side of tourism, the community is making an enormous effort to actively participate in the development of sustainable tourism, efforts which are often constrained by the geographical barriers of Boa Vista (sandy soil, poor accessibility to other islands) and the institutional and political situation of the island. As regards the demand side of tourism, the vast majority of tourists stay at the island's all-inclusive resorts, whereas few tourists require the services provided by the community, mainly because they are unaware that such services exist.

The study of Naipinit and Maneenetr (2010) presented that community participation was high with regard to developing ideas for tourism management, in planning locations for tourist attractions and use of natural resources. The greatest problem in the Busai Village Homestay in Nakohon Ratchasima Province, Thailand had to do with the public utilities: the water supply is limited and not clean, electricity is always out of order and does not cover all of the area, and the low quality of the roads affects tourists. The next problem is perceived cultural clashes with tourists, as inappropriate dress and noisy behavior. The next is the lack of participation from local organizations, and last is that there are no activities or second jobs available for people to increase the income to the village. The participation of people in sustainable tourist attraction management depends on villagers' skill levels, and the greatest participation for tourism is in natural resource management. Besides, it is almost required that community people participate in making a budget plan for supporting and developing tourist attraction (Taweekul, 2001 as cited in Naipinit & Maneenetr, 2010)

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- To investigate the physical and characteristics of tourist attractions in Koh Yao Yai
- To study the community participation in management of tourist attractions
- To suggest the ways to participate to develop Koh Yao Yai to be sustainable site

## **METHODS**

This qualitative research builds a sample by extremely cases and maximum variation sampling. The target group includes Koh Yao Yai leaders 15 subjects and villagers 40 subjects, totally 55 subjects. The data were collected during July 2016 by observation, in-depth interview and focus group discussion. The data were noted on structural interview and recorded by recorder. Camera is also used to record the pictures. The data analyzing process involved preparing (to record data into Microsoft Word), segmenting (to separate the group of data), coding (to code data by created group of data), categorizing (to reduce/categorize the group to data) and themetizing (to report the final groups of data).

## **RESULTS**

### **Natural Resources and Tourism Products in Koh Yao Yai**

The whole natural resources in Koh Yao Yai includes beaches, surrounding islands, forest and ecosystem are still plentifully. The number of forest slightly reduces while the water source is still exuberant. The communities determined the prohibited zone for conservation and sets up sea animal nursery as well as reduces the coral reef bleaching. Koh Yao Yai communities determined the period to prohibit sea animal hunting for preserving them and supporting the animals' breeding. Verdant areas in Koh Yao Yai and peaceful atmosphere shows its difference from surrounding tourism islands as Phuket, Phi Phi Islands and Lanta Island. Koh Khai is an island family of Koh Yao Yai where is recognized as cleaning beaches and beautiful island. Many people in Koh Yao Yai work in Koh Khai as tourists service providers (beach umbrella, mat, couch, tours, rental boat and, food and beverage services).

It seems to the hospitality of communities is also the core of tourism product in Koh Yao Yai that made the impressive experience to visitors. All respondents (communities) in Koh Yao Yai welcome and serve the visitor well. Santhiya Resort (teak and wooden resort) is the biggest and luxurious accommodation in Koh Yao Yai amongst many accommodations as medium sized resorts, small sized resorts and homestays. The accommodations are not enough in peak season. Pla Ching-Chang (Anchovy fish) and Khanom Babin (coconut macaroons) were mentioned the primary local

products in Koh Yao Yai. The souvenir products were imported from Koh Yao Noi and Bangkok (T-shirt) into Koh Yao Yai.

By observation, Koh Yao Yai showed problems on the communities' lack of participate in tourism management and planning decision, the cleanliness attitude development is the responsibility of school. Moreover, the infrastructure is still lacking as electricity was out of order in sometime, water supply problem and unclean water. Besides, there are piles of garbage that are the negative image and environment as well as some place lack of convenient accessibility (road). The island expressed the security by nobody used motorcycling helmets (no accident by motorbike) and the local people did not unplug the motorcycle's key even though it's the night time (no motorbike stealers). The main benefits from tourism activities are belong of business owner (resort), shop owners, restaurant and tours services while the main population gain revenue from fishery and agriculture. Impolite dressing and unappropriated behaviors from visitors are still affected the local culture.

### **Koh Yao Yai's Leaders**

The leaders explained the community to participate in tourism by hospitality – villagers are always welcome visitors and they are happy to live amongst many visitors. One hundred percentage of local people welcome the visitors and provided friendship. The tourism impacts on socio-culture for teenagers are impolite dressing (bikini) near religious areas and alcohol but the culture is not changed – community and the primary teenagers are still underline of Muslim culture. The schools in this island showed their role to motivate the children on natural conservation conscious. Moreover, the conservation activities and tourist attraction management included afforest and to grow mangrove forest are co-operated by school members and villagers as well as to clean and manage garbage on the beaches and along the road. The local people participate in tourism by showing the cooperative to produce the shrimp paste, demonstrating monkeys to collect coconut, presenting rubber tapping and fishery (way of life). The community services visitors by boating service and rental transport – motorcycle. The leaders announced in the meeting to need co-operate villagers to take care visitors well, environment preservation and teach teenagers on resources conservation by department of natural resources.

### **Koh Yao Yai's Community**

The community explained to cooperate on garbage management at homes by burning and sanitary landfill closing, wastewater management and to separate garbage by themselves. In addition, villagers co-operate with municipality's garbage management by garbage separation and keep the garbage by truck. "The Big Cleaning Day" is the evident showing they tent to keep the island clean by this monthly practice. The population participated to conserve their tourist attraction by afforest at road side and to grow the mangrove forest. They set up the botanic heredity center. They conserved the sea life by managing the time for fishery. The local people live under Muslim religion and conserve their religious ways. The communities set up homestay group in Koh Yao Yai to provide accommodation service to visitors. The villagers served visitors by providing services of homestay and accommodation, to sell local products at their own shop, boating services to observe the nature, rental motorcycle, rubber tapping, rice farming, fishing and way of life. The community co-operated with children under the school activities to preserve the natural and tourism resources. The villagers cooperate to take care of visitors. For example, they provided free of charge transfer when they met the visitor walking or lack of transportation.

### **Recommendation for Koh Yao Yai Development the Tourism Attraction**

The community should set up the conservation organization and community enterprise. The villages' members should separate garbage well and try to reduce the wastewater. The community should add the number of homestay and grocery shop. The accommodation is not enough in peak season. The villagers need to have walking street, central market for visitors and outstanding local products development.

### **DISCUSSIONS**

The results for this study accorded with the study of Nakthewan, Yangtale and Witchayakawin (2013) that revealed the sustainable tourism of Koh Yao Noi where is an island close to Koh Yao Yai, the finding showed that Koh Yao Noi got sustainability by many factors as cooperation between communities' leaders, local people and visitors. The tourism resources and physical environment in Koh Yao Noi are high abundances; the communities' leader should have more methods to distribute the economy to local people as wife house community settlement and local products for tourism market establishment. The Koh Yao Noi community should provide information about local regulation to living among local people and community, and traveling manual for visitors.

The communities in Koh Yao Yai participated garbage management and cooperated in resources conservation but the study of Naipinit and Maneenetr (2010) presented some different participation that community participation that was high with regard to developing ideas for tourism management, in planning locations for tourist attractions and use of natural resources. Moreover, Lekaota (2015) also expressed the importance of rural communities' participation in management by communities' involvement in management to make them felt that they were part of tourism development. In the Lesotho Northern Parks, not all stakeholders were involved in its management and planning. The local communities should be involved in both the decision-making and the operation of the nature reserves.

The study of Naipinit and Maneenetr (2010) presented the problems in the Busai Village Homestay in Nakohon Ratchasima Province, Thailand as water supply, electricity, tourists' negative behavior are the same problems in Koh Yao Yai.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The natural resources in Koh Yao Yai is plentifully that includes forests and beaches where the main tourist attractions are. Hospitality of local people also proved to all visitors as an experienced tourism product. The community participation in management of tourist attractions in Koh Yao Yai includes households five main points that include self-manage garbage by burning and sanitary landfill closing, community cooperates with municipality's garbage truck to separate and manage garbage in bin or bag as well as to co-operate cleaning beaches, villagers participate to preserve nature by tree planting along road and mangrove forest, zoning seagrass, and conserving heredity of sea animals and sea plant, community keeps well ways of life, believe and career to show the visitors, and villagers participate to clean the island on big cleaning day each month. Koh Yao Yai should set up a conservation center and manage the wastewater, garbage separation system and add more glossary shops and homestays. The local communities should be involved in both the decision-making and the operation of the nature reserves.

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